

Coroners Court

Monthly Suicide Data Report

December 2020 update

18 January 2021





WARNING: This following report includes information on suicides.

For help or information contact **beyondblue** on 1300 224 636, or **Lifeline** on 13 11 14.

Purpose

This report presents the December 2020 update to Victorian suicide statistics. This report was produced under the Coroners Court of Victoria's initiative to release timely and accessible data on suicide across the state.

Victorian Suicide Register

In Victoria all deaths from suspected non-natural causes including suspected suicides are required to be reported to the Coroners Court of Victoria. The Coroners Court reviews newly reported deaths on a daily basis to identify those that occur in circumstances consistent with suicide and adds these deaths to the Victorian Suicide Register (VSR).

The VSR has been in operation since 2012 and is the most accurate and timely data source for suicide in Victoria. VSR data is regularly shared with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Victoria Police, health services, and other bodies engaged in suicide prevention to inform their work.

Considerations when interpreting the data

Victoria's suicide frequency varies quite substantially from month to month. Additionally, there can be substantial variation in the monthly and annual frequency of suicides within particular cohorts. This variation, which is not unique to Victoria but is a feature of suicide data around Australia and internationally, usually results from random factors rather than underlying systemic issues or emerging clusters. The data therefore should be interpreted cautiously, with great care taken in drawing conclusions about any apparent increase or decrease that is observed.

Changes in reported frequencies over time

The deaths included in the VSR are regularly reviewed as coroners' investigations progress and more is learned about the circumstances in which they occurred. Deaths may be removed from the VSR if investigation establishes they are likely not to be suicides; likewise, deaths initially missed may be added to the VSR as new evidence consistent with suicide is gathered. This is why some data reported here may be different to what was reported in previous months.

However, data changes are usually quite minor: analyses have shown that over time, the VSR coding team are consistently 95% accurate or better in identifying the cohort of deaths that are ultimately determined to be suicides.

Monthly data update

1. Annual frequency

Table 1 shows the annual frequency of Victorian suicides as at 31 December each year for the period 2016-2020. The annual suicide frequency has been relatively steady over the past five years, with the full-year 2020 frequency slightly lower than in 2019 with 698 suicides. Approximately three out of four suicides each year are among males.

Table 1: Annual suicide frequency in Victoria by deceased sex, to 31 December, 2016-2020.

Sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	476	506	530	542	520
Female	177	188	187	176	178
Total	653	694	717	718	698

2. Monthly frequency

Table 2 shows the monthly frequency and aggregate monthly¹ frequency of Victorian suicides for the period January 2016 through to December 2020.

Table 2: Monthly frequency and monthly aggregate frequency of Victorian suicides, 2016-2020.

Month	Monthly frequency					Aggregate monthly frequency				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	59	62	45	73	63	59	62	45	73	63
February	51	49	51	61	63	110	111	96	134	126
March	60	71	65	54	73	170	182	161	188	199
April	44	50	61	57	52	214	232	222	245	251
May	59	52	56	65	57	273	284	278	310	308
June	49	52	54	54	55	322	336	332	364	363
July	48	67	70	54	58	370	403	402	418	421
August	58	59	56	62	60	428	462	458	480	481
September	62	40	54	54	50	490	502	512	534	531
October	49	62	67	65	50	539	564	579	599	581
November	57	62	75	55	65	596	626	654	654	646
December	57	68	63	64	52	653	694	717	718	698

1 The aggregate monthly frequency is the sum of frequencies for all months so far in each year. For example, the aggregate monthly frequency in March of a year is the sum of the monthly frequencies in January, February and March for that year.

3. Frequency by age group and sex

Table 3 shows the annual Victorian suicide frequency by sex and age group for 2016 to 2020. Most suicides occurred among those aged between 25 and 55.

Table 3: Annual suicide frequency by sex and age group, Victoria 2016-2020.

Age group by sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	476	506	530	542	520
Under 18	14	11	10	13	17
18 to 24	70	44	63	64	61
25 to 34	108	100	100	109	92
35 to 44	78	97	96	113	92
45 to 54	73	107	106	94	92
55 to 64	52	69	80	79	85
65 and over	81	78	75	70	81
Female	177	188	187	176	178
Under 18	3	5	5	8	2
18 to 24	21	19	21	19	16
25 to 34	31	35	42	27	43
35 to 44	31	33	33	29	36
45 to 54	38	42	25	32	27
55 to 64	30	24	33	27	26
65 and over	23	30	28	34	28
Total	653	694	717	718	698

4. Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria

Table 4a shows the annual suicide frequency by location of fatal incident (Metropolitan Melbourne or Regional Victoria) for the years 2016 to 2020. Table 4b shows the same data but represented as proportions of all suicides rather than as frequencies.

Table 4a: Annual suicide frequency by location of fatal incident, Victoria 2016-2020.

Location of fatal incident	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Metropolitan	440	475	477	458	463
Regional	213	219	240	260	235
Total	653	694	717	718	698

Table 4b: Annual suicide proportion by location of fatal incident, Victoria 2016-2020.

Location of fatal incident	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Metropolitan	67%	68%	67%	64%	66%
Regional	33%	32%	33%	36%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Approximately two-thirds of Victorian suicides each year in 2016-2020 occurred in metropolitan locations. The suicide frequencies in Metropolitan Melbourne and Regional Victoria have been relatively steady during the last five years.